

EYEWALLS

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Cosme Herrera

by [Garrett Heaney](#)

“Like many of us, as a child I had many insecurities. Adopting an identity was not only tough but often temporary. Growing up, we experience many trends in fashion, music and acquaintances. One thing that has remained constant since I was a child is the ability to create. Marcel Duchamp called this the creative act.”

(For those who like to read, we interviewed Cosme below this Eyewall)





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:: Interview ::

Eyewalls: When did you start taking art seriously?

Cosme: Like many of us, as a child I had many insecurities. Adopting an identity was not only tough but often temporary. Growing up, we experience many trends in fashion, music and acquaintances. One thing has remained constant since I was a child was the ability to create. Marcel Duchamp called this the creative act.

I started taking art seriously around the age of twenty when I took my first ceramics class in college. It was enlightening to learn that there were no rules in art. Until then, I had always thought of art in light of rules and formality. What is the correct way to make a painting, drawing? Which supplies are deemed an artist's materials? How well can I draw? What I learned in my sculpture class was that we live among objects: paintings and drawings being objects as well. This revelation allowed me to break free from the paintbrush and pencil to start experimenting with materials that I would have never considered using. My first sculpture was a ceramic teapot. After making this piece, I knew I wanted to take art seriously for the rest of my life.

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Eyewalls: How did you end up in NYC?

Cosme: After finishing up my B.F.A. in 3D Studio at the University of South Florida in 2003, I took a year off and continued to work as a junior preparator at the USF Contemporary Art Museum. This job exposed me to facets of contemporary and modern art I never knew existed. I applied to Pratt Institute in 2005 and was accepted for the fall semester. Pratt gave me an assistantship and scholarship to help with my studies which I could not refuse, so I was off to Brooklyn, New York.

Eyewalls: How would you describe your artistic style and the pieces that you create?

Cosme: I would never say I have an artistic style as much as I would say that I am interested in stories, histories and mythologies. I am very interested in telling a story through my works. I do not see each work as telling a particular narrative, but instead see the pieces working together in context to reveal plots and subplots.

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Eyewalls: How well does your mode of expression enable you to communicate with your audience?

Cosme: I feel that working with certain materials enables one to acknowledge the history and tradition that comes attached to its properties. Since I have chosen to work with wood, I have developed a personal relationship with the material. Ever since I was a child I remember being dropped off at my grandparents home where I had no toys to play with. My grandfather, a carpenter, would tell me to go to the shed in the backyard and grab some boards, nails, and a hammer. He would then demand that I build something while I was there. I can't tell you how many times I bashed my thumb. Working with wood so much allowed me to observe its grains and textures, which I immediately fell in love with.

Creating these stories about primitive rituals between man and trees has been my investment since November 2006. As of recent, I have been thinking of Paul Gauguin and his approach to observing and telling stories about the primitive or exotic through his painting. I am also interested in the magic that occurs in ceremonial ritual. Going to mass as a child, I remember all the formality and seriousness that went along with the procession. Growing up around two parents with two different sets of beliefs, I felt that finding my own spirituality would change into different things throughout the course of my life. In my work, I have chosen to blend various faiths to tell a story about man's cyclical relationship with trees using life and death as the model for spiritual growth.

Eyewalls: Do you have definitive goals as an artist, or is your relationship with your work more passive — that is, do you seek a specific purpose in your creations, or do you simply create art so that you can observe the way the world responds to it?

Cosme: I have personal goals as an artist but no definite goals. I feel that getting caught up in some pipe dream is distracting from the initial purpose of making the pieces. I use my work as a therapy that brings clarity to my life. Generalizations aside, I feel that making the art is introspective and necessary for my happiness. I will always make something. This is definitive. As far as I am concerned I will have a fulltime job for the rest of my life.

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Eyewalls: Do you have a routine or creative process when it comes to making your art? Where your ideas originate?

Cosme: I do not have a routine creative process. I would definitely admit that I have a rigorous method. My creative process often escapes me when I fall into a routine. I find the most clarity when doing conceptual maquettes and studies. This is how I am able to keep things fresh in a sense. I am always thinking about the final product. I am very methodical in this sense. How will it read? How will it make me feel? How do the ideas materialize within the piece? I find my balance working six months out of the year sketching and conceptualizing my ideas while the other six months are focused towards execution of those ideas through various media. I learn most from my work when I sit around it and focus on the imagery I have created. My ideas originate everywhere. Its how I pull from everywhere to create something that is sound and clear that is the challenge.

Eyewalls: Who are some artists that you value?

Cosme: The artists I am currently looking at are Ashley Bickerton, Anthony Goicolea and Chitrah Ganesh. These artists all have a very strong element of narrative in their works. A narrative that is mostly revealing of themselves whether through their cultures or realities. The wealth that I inherit from these artists is hope and inspiration for my own parables. I have always believed that storytelling is a powerful tool whether or not one is elaborating on the truth or not. The idea that someone can be genuine about not being genuine is fascinating to me.

Eyewalls: What are you focusing on in 2008?

Cosme: Currently, I am enveloped in three different projects. I am involved in the 27th Annual Bronx Artist In the Marketplace Program and will have a piece on display at the Bronx Museum the entire summer. In addition to this, I was invited to do a residency at the Vermont Studio Center for the month of June and July. Most importantly, I am embarking on a new journey in terms of my work. I am experimenting with new materials that I am drawing on with a router. That is all I can say for now, but I think I already gave away the project. (laughs)